

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

1. (Original) A system for maintaining security and gathering data for a plurality of vehicles comprising:

a vehicle activity module for each of said vehicles, said vehicle activity module including a wireless transmitter, sensors and a key container;

a central computer having a database for data storage, said central computer being in wireless communication with each of said vehicle activity modules;

key ID tags, which are attached to vehicle keys;

and personal ID cards which are issued to sales, maintenance and service personnel;

wherein: information read from personal ID cards by said sensors is transmitted to said central computer for authorization of access and recording of access activity; and information read from key ID tags attached to keys by said sensors is transmitted to said central computer for storage and analysis.

2. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein:

said vehicle activity modules operate in sleep mode until awakened by an event to report activity; and

said event is chosen from a group of events consisting of sales events, non-sales events and intrusion events.

3. (Cancelled).

4. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein:

said vehicle activity modules operates in sleep mode until awakened at periodic programmed intervals to report on status.

5. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 2, wherein:
said key ID tag information includes the presence or absence of said key ID tags,
and therefore of said keys, in said vehicle activity modules.
6. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 4, wherein:
said status which is reported includes a health check of said vehicle activity modules.
- 7-8. (Cancelled)
9. (Original) The system of claim 1, further comprising:
an intrusion sensor.
10. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein:
said sensors include an ID reader.
11. (Original) The system of claim 10, wherein:
said ID reader is an RFID reader.
12. (Original) The system of claim 10, wherein:
said ID reader is key tag/ID reader.
13. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein:
said information from said ID cards and key ID tags is used to generate alerts
and theft alarms.
14. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein:
said information are from said ID cards and key ID tags is used to generate
reports for inventory and administrative planning.

15. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein:
said information are from said ID cards and key ID tags is used to request access to vehicles.
16. (Original) A vehicle activity module for maintaining security and data gathering for a plurality of vehicles, to be used in cooperation with a central computer, personal ID cards, and key ID tags attached to vehicle keys, the vehicle activity module comprising:
a housing having a releasable key compartment, said housing being securely mounted to some portion of each said plurality of vehicles;
at least one ID reader by which ID information can be scanned from said personal ID cards and key ID tags;
and a wireless transmitter by which said personal ID card information and key ID tag information can be transmitted to a central computer for storage and analysis.
17. (Currently Amended) The vehicle activity module of claim 16, wherein;
said key ID tag information includes the presence or absence of said key ID tags, and therefore of said keys, within said vehicle activity module.
18. (Original) The vehicle activity module of claim 16, wherein;
said vehicle activity modules operates in sleep mode until awakened by an event to report activity.
- 19-22. (Cancelled)
23. (Original) The vehicle activity module of claim 16, further comprising;
an intrusion alarm.
24. (Original) The vehicle activity module of claim 16, wherein;
said ID reader is a magnetic strip reader.

25. (Original) The vehicle activity module of claim 16, wherein;
said ID reader is an RFID reader.
26. (Original) The vehicle activity module of claim 16, wherein:
said ID reader is key tag/ID reader.
27. (Original) A method for maintaining security for a plurality of vehicles, to be used in cooperation with a central computer, personal ID cards, and key ID tags attached to vehicle keys, the method comprising:
- A) attaching a vehicle activity module to each of said vehicles, said vehicle activity module including a wireless transmitter, sensors and a key container;
 - B) providing a central computer having a database for data storage, said central computer being in wireless communication with each of said vehicle activity modules;
 - C) providing that said vehicle activity module remains in sleep mode until awakened; and
 - D) transmitting a wireless signal from said vehicle activity modules to said central computer when awakened.
28. (Previously Presented) The method for maintaining security of claim 27, wherein:
- said vehicle activity module of C) operates in sleep mode until awakened by an event to report activity; and
 - said event is chosen from a group of events consisting of sales events, non-sales events and intrusion events.
- 29-31. (Cancelled)
32. (Previously Presented) The method for maintaining security of claim 27, wherein:

said sensors include at least one item selected from the group consisting of:
a key ID tag sensor, which reads key ID tag information concerning said keys upon opening or closing said key container;
an RFID reader; and
a key tag/ID reader.

33-34. (Cancelled)

35. (Currently Amended) The method for maintaining security of claim 27, wherein:
said transmission of step D) activates one or more alarms by the central computer upon receiving said transmission from said vehicle activity module.

36. (Currently Amended) The method for maintaining security of claim 35, wherein:
said one or more alarms ~~include~~ are selected from the group consisting of audio alarms on the grounds, audio alarms on the vehicle, notification to local police or security forces, visual disturbance warning, alerts by internet, ~~and~~ cell phone message to personnel, and any combinations thereof.

37. (Currently Amended) The method for maintaining security of claim ~~[[29]]~~ 27, wherein:
said transmission of step D) indicates a sales event including a demo drive, and demo drive time is automatically recorded in said central computer, and if a determination is made that the drive time exceeds a permitted limit, one or more alarms are sounded.

38. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 37, wherein:
said determination of exceeded time limit is determined by sensing the length of time that said key is absent from said key container.

39. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 29, wherein:

said transmission indicates a non-sales event, and a determination of exceeded time limit is determined by sensing the length of time that said key is absent from said key container, and if said time limit is exceeded, one or more alarms may be sounded.

40. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 29, wherein:
said transmission indicates an intrusion event.

41. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 40, wherein:
said key tag is checked whether it is the correct key when the key container is opened.

42. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 41, wherein:
if the key is correct and the event takes places during normal operating hours, the time that the key is missing from the key container is recorded and determined if returned within the maximum demo drive time limit, and if it is not, one or more alarms are activated.

43. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 41, wherein:
if the key is not correct, one or more alarms are activated.

44. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 41, wherein:
if the key is correct and the event does not takes places during normal operating hours, the time that the key is missing from the key container and the person ID who last accessed is recorded and transmitted on an accelerated basis, and if not returned within an accelerated time limit, one or more alarms are activated.

45. (Original) The method for maintaining security of claim 27, wherein:
said activity sensors include an intruder sensor, which if activated, cause one or more alarms to be activated.

46. (Currently Amended) The method for maintaining security of claim 27, wherein:
said transmission of step D) is a regularly timed signal, which if not received by
said central computer, cause one or more alarms to be activated.

47. (Currently Amended) The method for maintaining security of claim 27, wherein:
said transmission of step D) is a signal requesting access which is received by
said central computer and which returns an authorization signal which unlocks said key
container.

48. (Original) A method for collecting and analyzing data and on vehicle access for a
plurality of vehicles, to be used in cooperation with a central computer, personal ID
cards, and key ID tags attached to vehicle keys, and vehicle data, the method
comprising:

A) attaching a vehicle activity module to each of said vehicles, said vehicle
activity module including a wireless transmitter, activity sensors and a key container;

B) providing a central computer having a database for data storage, said
central computer being in wireless communication with each of said vehicle activity
modules;

C) providing that said vehicle activity module remains in sleep mode until
awakened; and

D) transmitting a wireless signal from said vehicle activity modules to said
central computer at the time of awakening.

49. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 48, wherein:
said vehicle activity module of C) operates in sleep mode until awakened by an
event to report activity.

50. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 49, wherein:
said event is chosen from a group of events consisting of sales events, non-sales
events and intrusion events.

51. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 48, wherein:
said vehicle activity module of C) operates in sleep mode until awakened at
periodic programmed intervals to report on status information.
52. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 48, wherein:
said activity sensors include a key ID tag sensor, which reads key ID tag
information concerning said keys upon opening or closing said key container.
53. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 48, wherein:
said transmission indicates a sales event, and sales event data including
personal ID data and key tag ID data are recorded in said central computer, along with
vehicle data, which can be organized into reports for sales and inventory status and
planning, sales personnel periodic reports and management projections.
54. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 48, wherein:
said transmission indicates a non-sales event, and non-sales event data
including personal ID data and key tag ID data are recorded in said central computer,
along with vehicle data, which can be organized into reports for personnel periodic
reports, inventory planning and management analysis.
55. (Original) The method for collecting and analyzing data of claim 48, wherein:
said transmission indicates an intrusion event, and event data are recorded in
said central computer, along with vehicle data, which can be organized into reports for
security planning and police reports.
56. (Currently Amended) An inventory management system for a plurality of vehicles
comprising:
a plurality of vehicle activity modules, each of which modules includes:
an identification number to uniquely identify the vehicle activity module;

a wireless transmitter;
an activity sensor;
a key container to receive a key; and
a key sensor to monitor the presence of a key in the key container;
a system computer having a database for data storage, said ~~central~~ system computer being in communication with each of the transmitters of said plurality of vehicle activity modules; and
a plurality of access ID cards having unique identification numbers, which cards may be used to gain access to a key contained in a vehicle activity module;
wherein the activity sensor reads a unique identification number of one of the plurality of access ID cards and verifies that the access ID card is authorized to have access to the key in the key container, and then permits access to the key container so that the key may be removed to operate a vehicle.

57. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 56, further comprising:

an access card activator which is located at a position remote from the plurality of vehicles being monitored and which is coupled in communication with the system computer,

wherein said access card activator reads a unique identification number of one of the plurality of access ID cards, transmits the unique identification number to the system computer which checks the database to determine if the unique identification number is authorized for use, and updates the database to indicate that the unique identification number is activated for a predetermined period of time.

58. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 56, further comprising:

an alarm coupled to the activity sensor, wherein the alarm is activated whenever the activity sensor detects an unauthorized intrusion into one of the plurality of vehicle activity modules.

59. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 58, wherein the alarm includes at least one of the following: an audio alarm that is sounded over a wide area including at least a portion of the geographical area in which the inventory of vehicles are located; an audio alarm on one or more of said plurality of vehicles; an electronic notification to local police; an electronic notification to a local security office; a visual disturbance warning; an electronic alert sent over the internet; an electronic mail notification to a predetermined email address; and an electronic alert delivered via cell phone.

60. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 56, wherein a predetermined vehicle activity module is attached to a predetermined one of a plurality of vehicles, said system further comprising:

a second key sensor, which second key sensor determines whether a key that is placed in the key container of the predetermined vehicle activity module is a key that is designed to operate the vehicle to which the predetermined vehicle activity module is attached, and wherein the system computer utilizes the database to track the identity of keys that are placed in at least one vehicle activity module.

61. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 56, wherein said key sensor is embedded within said key.

62. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 60, further comprising:

a plurality of key tags, each of which is configured to attach to a vehicle key, wherein the key tag has a unique key tag identification number which is used to identify the key to which it is attached;

wherein the second key sensor detects a unique key tag identification number to determine whether the key to which one of the plurality of key tags is attached is a key that is designed to operate the vehicle.

63. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 58, wherein the system computer sets a flag when the activity sensor permits access to the key container containing a key, and if the key sensor does not detect the return of the key within a predetermined time period, the system computer activates the alarm to indicate that the key has not been returned, wherein the alarm is selected from the group consisting of: an audio alarm on the vehicle whose key has not been returned; an electronic mail notification to a predetermined email address; an electronic notification delivered via a cell phone; and combinations thereof.

64. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 59, wherein the system computer sets a flag when the activity sensor permits access to the key container containing a key, and if the key sensor does not detect the return of the key within a predetermined time period, the system computer activates the alarm to indicate that the key has not been returned.

65. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 58, wherein the key sensor is configured to detect the return of a key that is not designed to operate the vehicle to which the vehicle activity module is attached, and upon such detection, the inventory management system activates the alarm to indicate that an improper key has been returned, wherein the alarm is selected from the group consisting of: an audio alarm on the vehicle to which the vehicle activity module is attached; an electronic mail notification to a predetermined email address; an electronic notification delivered via a cell phone; and combinations thereof.

66. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 58, further comprising a user interface program that permits an authorized user to run queries on information contained in the database.

67. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 66, wherein the user interface program is configured to be accessed from a location remote from the system computer by either a local area network or the Internet.

68. (Previously Presented) The inventory management system of claim 58, further comprising a user interface program receives input from a user, said input including a vehicle description, and said interface program generating a report to the user which identifies a location where a vehicle matching the input description may be found.